

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
11 SEPTEMBER 2013
7.35 - 9.45 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Mrs Hamilton (Vice-Chairman), Brossard, Gbadebo, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Temperton, Virgo and Dr Barnard

Reverend Canon N Parish, Church of England Representative
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Ms Hayes and Heydon
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Executive Members:

Councillor Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Liz Hassock, Business Manager, Integrated Youth Service
Deborah Hunt, CAHMS Link Worker
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Kashif Nawaz, Assistant Virtual School Head
Sheila McKeand, Head of Service for Looked After Children
Debbie Smith, Team Leader: Safeguarding and Inclusion
Bob Welch, Chief Adviser: Learning & Achievement

19. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the presence of the following substitute member:

Councillor Virgo for Councillor Ms Hayes.

20. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3 July 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

21. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest nor any indications that Members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

22. Urgent Items of Business

The Chairman gave notice that she had agreed to the addition of an item of urgent business to the agenda for the meeting. The report was in relation to the provisional examination and test results in Bracknell Forest Schools. The report was to be

considered as an urgent item because the information contained within it would be out of date by the time the Panel next met.

23. Public Participation

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

24. Examination and Test Performance in Bracknell Forest Schools: Academic Year 2012-13 Provisional

The Panel was provided with a summary of the provisional examination and test results for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stages 1 and 2, GCSE and Post 16 studies.

It was reported that the Early Years Foundation Stage data showed that attainment at age five was above the national attainment average. It was also noted that whilst data demonstrating the gap between the weakest 20% of children and the average point score was not yet available the gap had narrowed over the past couple of years and this trend was expected to continue.

At Key Stage 1 the results of teacher assessments showed that the majority of pupils had attained Level 2 or above and that results were above the regional and national averages. At Key Stage 2 the provisional results at Level 4+ show a continuing upward trend.

There were currently no secondary schools in Bracknell Forest which were below the current GCSE floor standard and 90.08% of students in Bracknell Forest achieved five or more A* to C grade GCSEs. At A Level 99% of those sitting the exams achieved a pass grade.

The Panel requested that data relating to the number of students achieving A* grades in different subjects be circulated.

It was noted that exam boards published data sets in October and that more detailed information would be included in the next Quarterly Service Report.

The Panel commended the successful achievements of the Borough's students.

25. Departmental Budgetary Position

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning gave a presentation in respect of the emerging budget position for the 2014/15 financial year. The presentation included an overview of the underlying principles of the Council's budget setting process, an overview of the assumptions made when initially planning the 2014/15 budget, the projected funding gap to 2016/17, an overview of the approaches adopted by the Council when addressing the funding gap and a timetable setting out the key steps in the approval of the 2014/15 budget.

The Panel noted the update.

26. Quarterly Service Report

Liz Hassock, Youth Service Business Manager, gave a presentation in respect of the take up of youth service provision by the young people of Bracknell Forest and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme. The presentation would be circulated to the Panel.

It was reported that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to improve the accuracy and robustness of attendance data for youth service sessions and that attendance to date had increased by 25% since the start of the new financial year in April with total attendance each month ranging between 2,090 and 3,354. The number of different individuals attending Youth Service sessions each month ranged between 1,105 and 1,547 with 760 young people attending sessions on a regular basis. It was confirmed that demographic data relating to a range of factors was collected to enable the targeting of specific groups.

There were currently 310 young people participating in the various phases of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme and during 2012/13 100 young people had achieved their Bronze Awards, 20 had achieved Silver Awards and 13 had achieved a Gold Award. All those who had achieved a Silver Award during 2012/13 had indicated that they wished to progress onto the Gold Award Scheme. Work was taking place to expand the availability of the Scheme in schools and other outlets including the Pupil Referral Unit, Kennel Lane School and the Youth Offending Service. An invitation to attend a Presentation Evening on the 26 September was extended to Panel members.

It was acknowledged that there were a number of synergies between the National Citizenship Scheme being run by Berkshire Youth and it was hoped that young people would become more involved with volunteering through the Volunteer Passport Scheme.

The Panel considered the Quarterly Service Report for Children, Young People and Learning for the first Quarter of 2013/14 (April to June) and arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- It was clarified that the term Out of Court Disposals used in relation to young offenders was a technical term used in the legal process
- All the bids made as part of the Schools Capital Programme had been successful and work was now taking place to allocate the funding
- Work had been taking place with Adult Social Care to draw out links between those known to be entitled to claim benefits and those claiming free school meals
- Bracknell Forest homes had launched a credit union which would help residents budget
- Ofsted were currently inspecting the Department

The Panel thanked officers for their updates.

27. Children's Social Care Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2012-2013

The Panel received a report containing the statutory Children's Social Care Annual Complaints Report. The report provided an overview of the work of the Complaints Manager, identified key issues arising from the complaints received and areas for improvement and an overview of the compliments that had been received by Children's Social Care.

It was noted that during the period covered by the report 37 complaints had been received and 26 of these had been investigated. This was higher than the number of complaints received during the previous year (24 complaints) however the number of open cases that were potentially eligible to make a complaint had been higher in 2012/13 than in 2011/12 (781 open cases in 2012/13 compared to 683 cases in 2011/12). In contrast, during 2012/13 a total of 138 compliments had been received. Arising from the Panel's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- The number of open cases referred to the number of children that the Children's Social Care Team was working with
- If a complaint was likely to conclude outside the proscribed timescales then an extension would be negotiated with the complainant
- It was usual practice to defer a complaints investigation if court proceedings were taking place
- When investigating a complaint it was standard practice to ask a complainant what it was they wanted to achieve by making the complaint at the outset of an investigation
- It was rare for the council to be required to pay costs or compensation associated with complaints

The Panel noted the report.

28. **Life Chances Team - Update**

The Panel were provided with an overview of the work of the Life Chances Team and a case study of the effect that the team's work had had on an individual.

The Life Chances Team was a multi-agency team that met on a monthly basis to look at the needs of the Borough's looked after children. Members of the team looked at a range of indicators for each child and if during this process it was found that multiple concerns were being noted then the case was brought to a meeting of the Life Chances Team for further discussion and to enable the planning and development of a way forward for the child in question. The Life Chances Team also looked at children who were considered to be on the edge of being taken in to care and those children who were about to leave care to ensure that the appropriate support was in place.

It was noted that whilst specific case files were not shared information relating to looked after children was added to a single database which all members of the Life Chances Team had access to. This simplified the identification of any issues that a child might have, what the blocks to improving the situation were and who was taking action to resolve a problem.

Although the main intention of the introduction of the Life Chances Team had been the development of a faster more cohesive approach to problem solving its introduction had also resulted in better communications between the various teams involved in the care of looked after children and a better understanding of each other's roles.

The Panel thanked officers for their informative update.

29. **Annual Report on the Work of the Virtual School**

Kashif Nawaz, Assistant Virtual School Head, presented a report containing the Annual Report on the Work of the Virtual School for 2012-13. The Virtual School had been established to ensure that looked after children received an appropriate education and made good progress. The Annual Report provided an overview of the service, an overview of the specialist support available to schools, information relating to celebrating the achievements of looked after children, data relating to the educational outcomes of looked after children, future steps and areas of challenge faced by the service.

It was noted that looked after children were placed in schools which were best able to meet their needs. A situation that on occasion required a child to be placed in an establishment outside the Borough.

The attendance rates of all looked after children in Bracknell Forest educational establishments was monitored on a monthly basis. The attendance of looked after children in establishments outside the borough was monitored on a termly basis. It was agreed that future reports would contain this information.

Drawing comparisons with the academic achievements of previous cohorts of looked after children were difficult as children moved in and out of the care system. However every looked after child was subject to a personal education plan and schools are asked to provide progress data for this.

It was agreed that the local authority should have the same aspirations for looked after children as it did for those not in the care system and that future reports would place greater emphasis on all children achieving a minimum of 5 A* to C grade GCSEs.

The Panel thanked Kashif Nawaz for his update.

30. Residents' Survey 2012 Results

The Panel noted a report providing the results of the Residents' Survey 2012 as they related to Children, Young People and Learning.

31. A Positive Approach to the Engagement of Young People

The Panel noted a report setting out the Council's agreed approach to youth engagement.

32. Executive Response to the School Governance Overview and Scrutiny Report

The Panel received the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning's Response to the review of school governance undertaken by a working group of the Panel.

The Panel thanked both the Executive Member for his positive response to the report and all the officers and governors who had contributed to the review. It was noted that a number of School Governing Bodies had expressed the view that the review would have a positive impact on their work and it was agreed that hard copies of the report would be sent to all School Governing Bodies in the Borough.

It was agreed that the Education Governor Appointments Committee would consider the report at its next meeting.

33. Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions

The Panel noted the scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning.

CHAIRMAN